Black and Irish is beautiful

PHILLIP LYNOTT
'Solo In Soho'
(Vertigo 9102038)****

IT'S BEEN a long time coming.

There's no doubt that Phil Lynott has always been the driving force behind Thin Lizzy, his greasy/sleazy coffee shop romeo image giving colour to the sharp edged attack of the band. He has occasionally revealed a penchant for writing, the more romantic dittie 'Sarah' being the most successful of his bunch. But Lizzy have never strayed too far from their main forte of producing some of the classiest rock and roll this side of World War III.

Lynott has already given his artistic leanings an airing by producing two books of illustrated poetry and lyrics, and this takes things one step further — the dreaded solo album.

So what are you expecting? A lot of folk generally regard solo outings as either (a) An artist's statement of dissatisfaction with his current situation (but the money's good). (b) An excuse for self indulgence. (c) An opportunity to make more moola.

Stuff all that. This record turns out to be a snatty selection of songs demonstrating Lynott's capabilities and all round general versatility. It's varied to the point of making some Lizzy fans sob into their denim jerkins but also totally unpretentious and undemanding enough to be enjoyed by almost anyone.

The album opens up with the single, 'Dear Miss Lonely Hearts' co-written by Wild Horse Jimmy Bain. A lot of people have already commented that it sounds like Lizzy, maybe that's to be expected. Anyway, it's only a taster of what's to come.

'Kings Call' features Mark Knopfler on geetar and sounds like a combination of mean, moody Dire Straits and early Fleetwood Mac. 'A Child's Lullaby' is pure corn but charming at the same time. Orchestrated 'n' all, Lynott reveals the more delicate side of his oral zone. The Jackson Five meet Southside Johnny in 'Giving It All Up For Love' which bounces along with Detroit City gusto. 'I'm a clapped out whore', proclaims a young wench on the introduction of the title track. The general superb crisp production (courtesy of Lynott) is at its zenith here, with some beautiful percussion. Lyrically it's Ireland's answer to Jacques Brel, musically it's Burning Spear. Suss that one out.

Side two opens up with what should be without a doubt the next single. 'Girls' (also co-written by Bain) is catchy almost to the point of infection. It's a real pre-pube groove. The effect is similar to reading Pink magazine with a plastic mac on. Lynott delves into the modern world with the assistance of Midge Ure in 'Yellow Pearl' which is smothered in treated keyboards and vocals, an interesting and adventurous excursion which works quite successfully.

We get down to the nitty gritty in 'Ode To A Blackman' which growls along menacingly with a three piece sound similar to ZZ Top. The last of the two tracks show Mr L's humourous/poetical side. 'Talk In '79' is a gaelic rapper's delight cum observation of the recent changes related in a fashion that is reminiscent of John Cooper Clarke and Roger McGough.

Personally spouting, I love the geezer's voice and I love this album and as far as I'm concerned the sun shines out of the guy's stetson. So don't listen to me, listen to the bleedin' record. Knoworrimean?

PETE MAKOWSKI

Pic by Robert Legon

PHIL LYNOTT looking less than butch